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TAGS: [PHUM YM](#)
SUBJECT: BMENA FORUM FOR THE FUTURE PLANNING MEETING,
SANAA, YEMEN, JUNE 3, 2007

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. At the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Forum for the Future planning meeting on June 3 in Sanaa, participants tentatively agreed on December 4 or 5 as the date of the Forum, pending confirmation of Foreign Ministers, schedules. U.S. delegation leader, NEA DAS Scott Carpenter, proposed that the Forum become more interactive by limiting interventions and adopting a panel-discussion format. Yemen announced that the parallel civil society meeting will take place the week before the Forum in Aden, and the Foreign Minister asked the USG for financial assistance. Participants agreed on the need for a media strategy and for increased private-sector participation. Carpenter provided an update on other BMENA initiatives, and Yemen proposed a BMENA secretariat. A second Forum planning meeting in July and a possible subministerial meeting in September in Berlin were discussed, but Germany was reluctant to commit to hosting either of them. End summary.

¶2. (U) NEA DAS Scott Carpenter and DRL DAS Erica Barks-Ruggles led the U.S. delegation to the June 3 planning meeting for the 2007 Forum for the Future in Sanaa. NEA/PI Foreign Affairs Officer Blake Thorkelson and Embassy Poloff also participated. Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Japan were represented. Participants agreed that the theme of this year's Forum will be "Partnership for Development and Progress." Participants also agreed with DAS Carpenter's suggestion that "education for employment" and "enhancing people's participation in the democratic process" be the sub-themes of the Forum. Regional political issues such as Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be discussed at the Foreign Ministers, working dinner the evening before the Forum ministerial.

FORUM DATES AND STRUCTURE

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¶3. (SBU) Participants agreed to determine their ministers, availability for December 4 or 5, with a senior officials' meeting the day before, and to respond to Yemen within a week. Yemeni Deputy Foreign Minister Mohy al-Din al-Dhabbi said that Yemen's financial responsibility is great, and asked any country that wants to contribute to Forum funding to meet with Yemen separately. German BMENA office director Renate Schimkoreit recommended the development of a colorful brochure to raise the Forum's profile and highlight accomplishments by civil society and governments.

¶4. (SBU) DAS Carpenter, supported by UK regional reform advisor Jacky Perkins, said that ministers have limited time at the Forum, so discussions should be more focused. Formal interventions should be limited and interaction with civil society organizations should be increased. A few ministers could give brief interventions at the beginning, but then

they should participate in panel discussions on specific topics in a plenary session. He offered to circulate through the Yemenis a proposal in writing. Bahraini Director of Bilateral Relations Dr. Dhafer Al-Umran said that senior officials should handle as much of the substantive discussion as possible to avoid boring interventions⁸ and that the room should be smaller than the one used at the Dead Sea to facilitate communication. Yemen, Germany, Russia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Japan will consult on the format and report to the larger group.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

15. (SBU) Russian Middle East Peace Process division head Sergey Kozlov endorsed a parallel civil society (CS) meeting and the presentation of recommendations to ministers. Bahrain called for a mechanism to improve follow-up on CS recommendations, or the CS groups "will shoot us down." DAS Carpenter agreed, saying that CS has "recommended to death" and needs to move beyond recommendations to reporting on how those recommendations have been implemented by governments. He called for increased outreach to CS groups on how their participation in the Forum should be organized, including encouraging the formation of national civil society committees. He called for increased outreach to CS groups on how their participation in the Forum should be organized, including encouraging the formation of national civil society committees. He also suggested that G8 and BMENA governments could participate in webchats with civil society groups to show official engagement on their issues. The Yemeni DFM agreed that CS in each country should be asked to organize and structure itself, because so many groups want to participate. The parallel meeting will take place in Aden the week before the Forum, and will include 400-500 NGOs.

16. (C) In a sidebar conversation, Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi told DAS Carpenter that Yemen does not need financial assistance for the Forum itself, but does need assistance with the parallel civil society meeting. He said that Yemen agreed to host the Forum late in the day, and needs assistance in this one area. (Note: In a separate meeting, Human Rights Information and Training Center Director Ezzeddin Al Asbahi told DAS Carpenter that it was HRITC that had recommended holding the parallel session in Aden to avoid government interference.)

17. (U) The UK's Jacky Perkins said that G8 civil society has not had enough participation in the Forum and noted that many of them have good experience working with governments. The Arab Business Council also could represent the private sector.

MEDIA STRATEGY

18. (U) DAS Carpenter and DAS Barks-Ruggles called for a Forum media strategy along the lines of the panel discussions and dedicated media center at the 2005 Forum in Bahrain, and recommended briefing the media after the next planning meeting. Bahrain suggested including the media in the planning meeting itself, which others disagreed with. The UK instead recommended a joint op-ed by the German and Yemeni foreign ministers in advance of the Forum.

BMENA SECRETARIAT

19. (SBU) Yemen circulated a paper proposing a BMENA secretariat. DAS Carpenter said that the USG has resisted a

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secretariat in the past, but he would discuss the proposal

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internally and report back to the group. He suggested the Chair's Summary of December's Forum could call for the

establishment of a secretariat to evaluate progress on the initiative and change in the region in time for BMENA's fifth anniversary in 2008. The Russian representative said that the proposal should be discussed with civil society. Deputy DG for the Middle East Shinsuke Sugiyama said that Japan is not against a secretariat, but is opposed to the "institutionalization" of a large structure to support BMENA; DAS Carpenter said the USG agrees.

OTHER BMENA INITIATIVES

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¶10. (SBU) DAS Carpenter gave a brief update on BMENA initiatives. He said that the Foundation for the Future had just held its third board meeting in Manama, where it approved five projects, has opened an office in Amman, and has hired a chief financial and chief operating officer. The Department plans to notify Congress of the U.S. Foundation contribution in June. He also called for the G8 to reinvigorate the BMENA Business Dialogue. Dr. Al-Umran of Bahrain noted the lack of progress in the finance channel. Lebanon is charged with organizing the BMENA Finance Ministerial, but political developments in Lebanon have stalled the work.

¶11. (SBU) Al-Umran complained about the lack of G8 support for the Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence in Bahrain (CEEB), which so far has received funding only from the U.S. and UK. Noting that CEEB is a project of the entire G8, he cautioned against launching any new initiatives without strong G8 support for fear that they will "fade away." DAS Carpenter said that the CEEB has done a good job and the U.S., UK, and Bahrain have all requested other G8 members to provide funding. He expressed disappointment that the center will close later this summer and said the U.S. will consider further funding if/if there are matching funds from other G8 donors. Schimkoreit said she understood that the first priority is G8 co-ownership, not funding. Al-Umran welcomed anything that would show G8 commitment and said that the center will be self-financing later. He said that local media will ask why Bahrain created the center if the G8 is not taking a leadership role.

FUTURE PLANNING MEETINGS

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¶12. (C) Participants agreed to hold the next planning meeting on July 13 or 14. The U.S. delegation recommended including civil society and broadening the numbers of countries included. Germany and the UK argued that enlargement would dilute the focus of the discussion, but the UK said NGOs should be included in the third meeting. Noting that the

final decision is up to Germany and Yemen, DAS Carpenter said that in the past, Turkey had participated as a Democracy Assistance Dialogue partner, and that it is useful to have the Egyptian perspective so that it is not disruptive later. (Note: In a June 7 phone call, Carpenter and Schimkoreit agreed that Democracy Assistance Dialogue partners Italy and Turkey, and their partner NGOs, would be invited to the next planning meeting. Carpenter also recommended that the "steering group" of the parallel NGO forum be included. End Note) He recommended that Germany and Yemen hold briefings in capitals after each planning meeting to convey updates to all G8 and BMENA governments. Bahrain and Japan recommended including the 2008 host once it is announced. Kozlov noted that Russia will hold an academic seminar on BMENA issues in St. Petersburg in October.

¶13. (C) Germany said it could not commit to hosting the July 13/14 meeting, but would report back to the other delegations; DFM Al-Dhabbi offered Sanaa as a backup. In the June 7 phone conversation with Schimkoreit, DAS Carpenter stressed that hosting the second planning meeting is expected of the G8 presidency, in keeping with past practice, and that countries in the region were perplexed that Germany had not offered to host in July. He stressed that even if Germany decided to host the July meeting, the USG will continue to

press Germany on the September subministerial, and that the July meeting is not a substitute for the subministerial.

GERMAN LACK OF COMMITMENT TO HOST SUBMINISTERIAL

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¶14. (C) In a sidebar conversation with Schimkoreit, DAS Carpenter noted that in previous G8 meetings, Germany had agreed to host a subministerial meeting in September. Schimkoreit said that her instructions were to decline to host and recommend that the meeting be held in Sanaa.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) Participants mostly shared common views on how to reinvigorate the Forum. Russian calls to coordinate with civil society were a surprise. Germany, however, continues to disappoint with its lack of engagement. It was the U.S., not the G8 presidency, that was called on to update on BMENA initiatives. And Germany could not even commit to hosting the second planning meeting on July 13/14, as is tradition for the G8 co-host. In her June 7 call with DAS Carpenter, Schimkoreit seemed frustrated with her own government, but did not indicate the prospect that Germany would organize the subministerial. The Department will need to continue pushing Germany to live up to its G8 leadership responsibilities to the BMENA initiative.

¶16. (U) DAS Carpenter and DAS Barks-Ruggles have cleared this cable.

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